

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 17851

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, JA, US, KS

SUBJECT: CONTINUED JAPANESE UNEASINESS OVER POSSIBLE US TROOP
WITHDRAWALS FROM KOREA

REF: TOKYO 16819

SUMMARY: IN BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS, GOJ
OFFICIALS HAVE CONTINUED TO EXPRESS UNCERTAINTY AND
CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS OF US KOREAN POLICY
UNDER NEW ADMINISTRATION. FONOFF OFFICIALS HAVE
REPEATEDLY STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTATIONS BEFORE
ANY TROOP WITHDRAWAL, WHILE JDA OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN
UNPRECEDENTEDLY EXPLICIT IN DESCRIBING US FORCE
PRESENCE IN ROK AS "ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITE" FOR
STABILITY IN NE ASIA. ADDITIONALLY, ONE JAPANESE
OBSERVER HAS DETECTED SIMILAR UNEASINESS AT LOCAL
SOVIET AND CHINESE EMBASSIES OVER POSSIBILITY OF RAPID
US WITHDRAWAL. END SUMMARY.

1. IN BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMENTS, GOJ
OFFICIALS HAVE CONTINUED TO REITERATE BASIC THEME
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OF PREVIOUS STATEMENTS ON NECESSITY OF US TROOPS

IN ROK (REFTEL). IN NOV 26 APPEARANCE BEFORE TOKYO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB, FONMIN KOSAKA TOOK NOTE OF "COMPLEX NATURE" OF POWER BALANCE ON KOREAN PENINSULA AND WARNED THAT ANY MOVE WHICH UPSET THAT BALANCE WOULD BE MOST TROUBLESOME FOR JAPAN. HE REAFFIRMED IMPORTANCE GOJ ATTACHED TO CONSULTATIONS WITH US ON ANY TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH KOREA.

2. SIMILAR COMMENTS HAVE BEEN OFFERED PERSISTENTLY AND WITHOUT SOLICITATION BY FONOFF TO BOTH EMBOFFS AND VISITORS FROM US. FONMIN KOSAKA RECENTLY TOOK OCCASION OF COURTESY CALL BY CONGRESSIONAL STAFF DELEGATION TO DISCOURSE FOR 45 MINUTES ON IMPORTANCE OF US FORCES IN KOREA. AT FONOFF BRIEFING OF US STATE LEGISLATORS TRANSITING TOKYO FOR VISIT TO PRC, NORTH AMERICA DIVDIR WATANABE MADE SPECIAL POINT OF OUTLINING SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR JAPAN OF KOREAN SITUATION AND, REFERRING TO PAST "NIXON SHOCKS," EMPHASIZED NEED FOR FULL CONSULTATION BEFORE ANY MAJOR US ACTION IN REGARD TO KOREA.

3. JDA OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN EVEN MORE EXPLICIT THAN THEIR FONOFF COUNTERPARTS. IN PRESS BRIEFING JDA VICE MINISTER MARUYAMA NOTED THAT US WITHDRAWAL "WOULD INVALIDATE THE BASIC PREMISES FOR THE FORMULATION OF OUR STANDARD DEFENSE FORCE CONCEPT." HE WENT ON "PRESENCE OF US MILITARY FORCES, ESPECIALLY GROUND FORCES, IN THE ROK IS AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION FOR MAINTAINING STABILITY IN THAT PENINSULA, WHICH IN TURN MAKES IT AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION FOR JAPAN'S OWN STABILITY. IN MY VIEW, SIMPLY TALKING ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH A WITHDRAWAL CAN HAVE A PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT DETRIMENTAL TO THE STABILITY OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA AND JAPAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY." MARUYAMA FURTHER SAID THAT US TROOP PRESENCE IN KOREA WOULD CONTINUE TO BE "ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITE" FOR STABILITY INDEPENDENT OF FUTURE SUCCESS OF ROK MILITARY MODERNIZATION PROGRAM.

4. IN PRESS ARTICLE AND AT SEMINAR FOR TOKYO DIPLOMATS,
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FORMER JDA VICE MINISTER AND NOW DEFENSE CONSULTANT KUBO WARNED THAT ANY US FORCE REDUCTION IN ROK SHOULD BE CONDITIONED "NOT ONLY BY THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A MILITARY BALANCE, BUT ALSO BY THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT." REFERRING TO US WAR-POWERS ACT AS LIMITING DISCRETIONARY POWERS OF PRESIDENT TO INTERVENE IN CONFLICT, KUBO SAID THAT AS LONG AS US GROUND FORCES WERE DEPLOYED AT KOREAN FRONT THERE WAS

NO NEED FOR ANXIETY.

5. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, JAPANESE MIGHT NOT BE ONLY ONES NERVOUS OVER TROOP WITHDRAWAL QUESTION. DURING CALL ON EMBOFFS TO DISCUSS KOREA, TAKEO KUBA, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ADVISER TO LH DIET MEMBER TOKUSABURO KOSAKA (FONMIN'S BROTHER), COMMENTED THAT IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH TASS REPRESENTATIVE AND SOVIET EMBOFFS, SOVIETS HAD EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF RAPID US TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM KOREA. KUBA FURTHER CLAIMED THAT HE HAD FOUND SIMILAR UNEASE ON PART OF CHINESE IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH LOCAL PRC EMBASSY.

6. COMMENT: TOKYO PRESS HAS ALSO PICKED UP THEME IN SOMEWHAT DRAMATIC TONE--ASAHI: "THE TIGHTROPE DIPLOMACY OF JAPAN HAS BEEN VIOLENTLY SHAKEN BY THE TALK OF A WITHDRAWAL OF US TROOPS FROM KOREA." MORE SERIOUS THAN MEDIA'S SPECULATION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN CONTINUING EVIDENCE OF CONCERN WITHIN OFFICIAL CIRCLES ABOUT TROOP WITHDRAWALS. WHILE SOME OF THIS UNEASINESS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO TRADITIONAL JAPANESE DISTASTE FOR UNPREDICTABLE ASPECTS OF ANY MAJOR CHANGE IN STATUS QUO, REPEATED REFERENCE TO IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTATIONS BETRAYS PERSISTING FEAR OF ANOTHER "SHOCK." HODGSON

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